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Figure of Buddha from a Buddhist Scroll Painting
The Worcester R. Warner Collection

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TWO BUDDHIST SCROLLS

During the short expedition sent to the Orient by the Museum last year, we secured for the Worcester R. Warner Collection a pair of Buddhist paintings which have been the cause of considerable interest and discussion among the various scholars who have examined them.

Painted on thick, leather-like paper in colors which have lost little of their crisp value, these two scrolls were evidently hung down pillars in the body of a temple, or possibly behind the altar. They are, in their present condition, about six feet eight inches long and one foot and three-quarters of an inch wide, but have lost several inches from their length from being turned over at the top on the occasion of some pious repair.

Each has three Buddhist figures arranged vertically, seemingly with little reference to one another, between which are conventional clouds and naturalistic trees. The panels are enclosed by a formal border of foliage, and at the bottom, set definitely apart from them, is a group of "still life"—flowers, scrolls, vases, writing-brushes, etc.

Buddhist paintings of this shape are not unfamiliar, for Northwest China has yielded a few sets, of similar proportions, bordered in a like manner with foliage designs and ending with groups of vases, writing-materials, etc. All those, however, which I have seen have been obviously of recent date, none earlier than perhaps the XVIII century. The paper has been coarse and not remarkable for strength, the color and drawing has been that of the usual non-Lamaist Buddhist picture of the last two centuries.

Aesthetically the Cleveland scrolls have a decorative value far beyond these others, although they are of the same shape and sort. Their drawing, too, is adequate and sound, unlike any modern work with which we are familiar; in fact, it can best be compared with that of the frescos of Chotscho (Eastern Turkestan) and the paintings from several unnamed desert sites brought back by Sir Aurel Stein. In particular, the faces are of the type more associated with the work of T'ang, both in sculpture and painting, than that of any other period, being

full-cheeked with high arched brows, and having, in the one face shown in part profile, a nose that is distinctly curved.

Perhaps the most striking parallel that is accessible to us for comparison in America is the face of the central figure in the Hokke Mandara in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; a painting which after many years of ascription to India and Japan is now definitely settled to be Chinese T'ang. This is the more significant as even when its *provenance* was in doubt the period has always been unhesitatingly pronounced eighth or ninth century A.D. Although the face of this particular deity has suffered from restoration in the XV century, it is reasonable to suppose that the contours of the cheeks and the proportions of the features have not suffered enough to make the comparison worthless. A comparison of the two heads—that from the Boston painting and that from the Cleveland—serves to bring out the similarity more clearly than words can do. The width of the space between the eyelashes and the brow should be particularly noticed, as that, together with the curve of the brow itself and the angle at which it is set, has proved to be one of the most serviceable tests in determining the approximate period of sculpture of the times, though I am not aware that it has been definitely applied to painting by Western critics.

The conventional cloud forms which occur between the figures of the gods have already been mentioned. In form they are characteristic of T'ang work as we know it both in sculpture and in painting. The peculiar triple or quadruple lining of each cloud is one of the most noticeable facts in the technique of the Stein collection as a whole. It was carried over to Japan where it was called *goku zaishiki* in the Hakuho period (645-709 A.D.) and used extensively in this manner until the twelfth century when it assumed peculiar national characteristics not easily confounded with the Chinese.

The illustrations give sufficient idea of this conventional rendering of clouds. It is perhaps where these clouds occur that the drawing of curves, which is peculiar to the age, is shown to the best advantage. Representation is of the very slightest importance, and the fashion in drawing which marks the time and the locality holds undisturbed control.

So far as the colors may be taken for an indication of age,

we are rather at a loss for comparative material later than the tenth century. While these are distinctly the colors of the Chotscho frescos and of other early work, we have no evidence that the tradition of the same pigments and the manner of applying them was not held in the same region through many centuries. The most that can be said is that mediæval and late paintings of China proper—that is of the river valley centers—show no slatey gray such as that which is largely used in the Cleveland scrolls and in paintings of known antiquity, nor any of the same clear orange and the pink. The red and the green and the lighter blue are familiar enough in China to-day, particularly among Buddhist paintings, where their application is even now in characteristically opaque layers.

Line is used consistently as a boundary of color and an expression of contour, and the only gradations of color are those in the streaming clouds. Even there, the pigment is not thinned out in the manner of the European or the later Chinese water-colorist, but different colors or intensities of color are overlapped. Line is in no case used with the swelling brush stroke which after Sung times bore the double burden of representing contour and surface.

This latter fact is no proof that the paintings are earlier than Sung, since Buddhist hierarchic painting conserved the ancient manner as perfectly as was humanly possible. But it may fairly suggest a respectable antiquity, for however strongly the mediæval and later craftsmen strove to carry on the tradition of technique, the new methods of non-Buddhist painters had not long been developed before they permeated religious art and betrayed the times. More significant still, the bit of nature which is introduced in each scroll—in one case a pine tree and in the other a blossoming plum—is treated in a manner not in any way associated with the recognized landscape schools. It may be described as a smudge of color with the detail roughly picked out in colored lines over it.

Buddhist painting in Western China is associated in the minds of most of us with the more or less modern Lamaist pictures falsely called "Tibetan," which are produced at Peking or at Wu T'ai Shan for the use of the Mongol church. What flavor they may still keep of the Tibetan work from which they are copied—in itself an ill-blended mixture of

North India and China—can not save them from hopeless mediocrity. The colors are garish until sufficiently smutched with the smoke of dung incense and of butter lamps, the drawing is at best “painstaking” and the composition is what the mold of a stiff tradition has shaped. Further comment on these productions seems unnecessary. They are mentioned because they represent the only modern work with which we are familiar from Northwest China. The Cleveland scrolls can hardly be tortured into the most distant relationship with them.

Other Buddhist painting from Western and Northwestern China is known to us only through the finds of Stein, von Le Coq, Pelliot, Kozlov, Count Ōtani and one or two other archæologists who have excavated paintings on silk and paper or have found the remains of Buddhist chapels decorated with splendid frescos.

This material, with its subdivisions, forms a class by itself in no way related to the mediæval and modern art of the Lamaist sects of Buddhism. Its characteristics have never been set down in such a way as clearly to distinguish it from other art movements in the Orient, but they are none the less capable of definition.

In the main these are: a technique in color based on the tinting of areas within ink outlines, a habit of suggesting rotundity by shading depressions irrespective of any natural direction of light, and thirdly the use of two or more coats of water-color which give an opaque and chalky appearance to the surface.

Of these, the first is nothing more than the natural early stage of painting in color which is not peculiar to the history of Oriental painting. It is mentioned here because it was early abandoned by the Chinese, except those painters of the hierarchic Buddhist school who carry it on to the present day.

The second, more significant characteristic—that of indicating form by shading depressed areas—seems to be a feeling after the true chiaroscuro developed in Europe. It is first noticed in the early Central Asian paintings and, except for a few isolated Japanese examples, seems not to have taken root at a later period or spread with Buddhism and the arts to the river valleys of China and the coast. The frescos of Chotscho, which can hardly be later than the tenth century A.D., are

rendered in this way, as are many of the subsidiary finds of paper and silk pictures from the same place. The more important pictures and frescos which comprise the Stein collection in the British Museum are in the same manner, and so are the somewhat later ones deposited by Kozlov in Petrograd.

I know of nothing in Europe which suggests this mannerism, with the possible exception of Byzantine art, nor do I know of anything from China of a later date than those objects just mentioned. I should not hesitate to call it the most obvious and characteristic trait of the art of the China-Indian trade route during the first six centuries of the Christian era.

The third characteristic—that of underpainting—was inherited by the Buddhist painters of China and Japan, but soon passed out of use for non-Buddhist subjects when the naturalistic schools of the Sung caligraphic landscape painters appeared. Its death blow was the close association of painting with literature and the refusal of critics to consider it as a craft apart from caligraphy. That it was revived in the precious times of the late XVII century in Japan is irrelevant.

The top figure in each scroll is the Buddha, seated cross-legged with an alms bowl in his lap and his right hand on his knee. Behind his body is a circular halo of green and a larger concentric one composed of the rays of colored light which emanated from his body. These rays are curved upward with a suggestion of the plume fans which are depicted in the sculptures of the Six Dynasties and of India. Their colors and arrangement remind one of nothing so strongly as of the frescos of Chotscho and the paintings collected by Sir Aurel Stein. Back of the head is a smaller circular halo from which the color in both pictures has peeled off, leaving only fragments enough to show that it was originally green. Above is a baldachin, or an umbrella, of red and blue from which hang streamers and back of which are red and yellow clouds. (See page 154.)

On scroll "A" the second figure is that of a Vajrapani surrounded by flame and smoke of pink, yellow, two shades of green and touches of orange. His hands are clasped, and across the outstretched arms is laid a vajra sword with the circular pommel peculiar to early representations. The upper part of the body is naked and the long black hair streams back and up. The face, body, arms and legs are rendered with

yellow wash outlined and emphasized by brown. It is in the drawing of this figure that the Central Asian character inherited from India is most noticeable, namely the shading of depressed areas regardless of any single direction of light. All the faces have it to a certain degree, but on this figure it is exaggerated to a mannerism which leaves no doubt as to the fact that it represents an art essentially not Chinese. The face may best be compared to that on a fragment of silk collected by von Le Coq at Chotscho, which closely resembles it in expression and manner of drawing. Unlike the blankly outlined faces of the Buddhas and Bodhisattva, this lesser divinity is full of passion and the human expression of it. That such was the tradition is shown by the similar treatment of demigods in the very earliest Buddhist sculptures of China, who gesticulate and brandish their weapons next to the stiffest, most archaic Buddhas.

Below the vajra-bearer is the bit of landscape already mentioned, a plum tree in blossom appearing from the clouds. And underneath, backed by pink, yellow and green cloud forms, is a Bodhisattva in the unusual position of both hands in the air, the left holding a long-stemmed lotus flower and the right half-closed. (See page 167.)

The headdress of this figure is a red crown with what probably was intended for a thirteen-storied pagoda in the front, behind which the hair is brought up in high coils. Over the dark red undergarment is a blue cloak caught together at the waist and showing a white decorated lining. On the blue are clouds in gold, and on the red are dragons. The feet are bare, but over the ankles, just below the edge of the gown, show green ruffles turned up like those of the armor shoes generally worn by Deva Kings.

The pine-clad slope below the feet of this figure is relieved against a curling white cloud, but in itself consists of hardly more than a confused mass of brush strokes.

Surrounding the whole panel of three figures, and including this fragment of landscape, is a border of conventional foliage outlined against a red background. The design, especially as it occurs on this border, is obviously derived from a textile original. Probably a brocade was once used to frame such paintings. The three or four pairs of scrolls, similar in shape

to these in the Cleveland Museum, which have come to my notice were all bordered in a similar manner, although the treatment of the foliage was far less suggestive of early work.

The bottom of scroll "A" is occupied by an unbordered panel, the manner of which at first sight seems to vitiate all suggestion of a period earlier than the Yuan dynasty. For the group of objects represented contains no hint of great age. However, the pigments used are undoubtedly the very ones employed in the main part of the painting and the paper, though broken through above this panel, was once continuous.

Some of the objects shown at the bottoms of the two scrolls were, so far as we now know, not made earlier than the very end of the Sung dynasty if indeed they appeared so early. Among them is a "cracked ice" celadon and a pink jar that looks like Ming porcelain. It is no more than fair, however, to mention that in the Freer Collection of the Smithsonian Institution are paintings attributed by Mr. Freer with much reason to the T'ang and Sung dynasties, which show glass and what seems to be porcelain of a very modern appearance.

Among other things in this group of "still life" is a scroll, obviously a part of the Buddhist scriptures. It is provided with lacquered wooden ends that are distinctively T'ang in style and not usually associated with later periods. So marked is this characteristic that a Japanese archæologist, to whom the painting was shown, considered the fact significant enough to prove a date no later than the eleventh century. In this opinion I can not concur.

Scroll "B" shows similar figures to those on scroll "A"—but transposed in order. Below the Buddha, who is seated cross-legged at the top, is a Bodhisattva, who holds before his breast a decorated tablet, or wand, in both hands. Above the black hair is set a gorgeous crown composed of three cocks (phoenixes?) orange-pink in color, with streaming tail feathers. The red outer robe is decorated with gold phoenixes, and is cut with a green fringed cape and long sleeves lined with blue and yellow. The inner garment, which shows only at the skirts above the crimson-soled shoes, is of blue and brown decorated with conventional clouds.

Vertically under the Bodhisattva stands, with straddling feet, an armored figure which probably represents one of the

Guardian Kings. Across his arms, which are outstretched in the act of clasping his hands, rests a sword with a foliated back and round pommel. His helmet is plumed with crimson.

To sum up the rather inconclusive evidence: the pair of scrolls acquired by the Museum has a general character which at once suggests the work produced in Western China and Central Asia before the X century A.D. Certain important details go far toward proving the theory held by many scholars, that similar work was produced in that locality during the succeeding centuries. Even the most cautious critic will hardly suggest that they are later than the XV century. Further evidence may at any time appear to settle the question. In the meantime they remain a valuable addition to the Oriental collections of the Museum, a department where few of the earlier and more important objects can be dated with accuracy.

L. W.

RODIN MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

The Museum opened in Gallery II, on November 25, one week after his death, a special exhibition of works of Auguste Rodin, which will remain open through December. This exhibit had been planned for the Spring, when it was hoped to include the large bronze head of one of the Burghers of Calais, and the bronze of "The Man of the Age of Bronze," which are still being held for shipment in Paris; but Rodin's sudden death seemed to make an early exhibit desirable.

In addition to the marble group recently presented to the Museum by Mr. Salmon P. Halle and illustrated herein, are shown the large original plaster head of one of the Burghers of Calais, the small bronze of the man with the keys from the Burghers of Calais group, and a small bronze foot—all the gift of Miss Loïe Fuller; the small plaster model of a leg presented by Rodin; the plaster miniature model for one of the panels of the Gates of Hell, nineteen colored drawings of remarkable quality and many photographs signed by Rodin, lent by Miss Loïe Fuller; a bronze masque of Hanako and a head from the Gates of Hell, lent by Mr. Salmon P. Halle; a bronze of The Eternal Springtide lent by Mrs. Frank A. Muhlhäuser; portraits of Rodin by Zorn and Gertrude Kasebier,



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